



PROJECT SHIELD

FUNDING:	\$2.75 million annually
LENGTH OF PROGRAM:	Four years
NUMBER OF SITES:	Seven sites and one coordinating center
TARGET POPULATIONS:	Adolescents/young adults and women
GOALS:	<p>Project SHIELD, the HIV/AIDS High-Risk Behavior Prevention/Intervention Model for Adolescents/Young Adults and Women Program is designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the key factors in implementation and evaluation of a community-focused prevention/intervention protocol that encourages and enables adolescents/young adults and women who are at risk for HIV/AIDS to reduce high-risk behaviors and practices.• Develop and test reliable and valid outcome measures, at both the individual and community levels, to assess the effectiveness of the intervention in reducing high-risk behaviors among adolescents/young adults and women.
BACKGROUND:	<p>Project SHIELD is a program supported with funding from the Center for Mental Health Services/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (CMHS/SAMHSA). The purpose of Project SHIELD is to develop and test, under real-world conditions, relatively brief behavior change interventions aimed at two subgroups at high risk for HIV infection: adolescents/young adults and women.</p> <p>The program includes seven intervention project sites (four sites studying adolescents/young adults, and three sites studying women) and one coordinating center. Investigators from the collaborating sites and the coordinating center have jointly developed two similar behavioral interventions designed to reduce high-risk behaviors associated with HIV/AIDS transmission. The interventions are based on a thorough review of the scientific knowledge base, a common underlying theoretical model, and established, relatively intensive interventions for adult women and adolescents/young adults, including the National Institute of Mental Health sponsored Project LIGHT.</p> <p>The primary difference between the two Project SHIELD interventions is the focus on their respective target populations. The interventions share a common social-cognitive theoretical framework, cover similar content (such as skills-building for condom use and negotiation of safer sex activities), and provide opportunities for skills practice and reinforcement of safer sex attitudes and behaviors. Each intervention consists of a single session of about 3 hours duration which have the potential to be implemented in diverse community settings and reach larger numbers of at-risk individuals.</p> <p>The Project SHIELD study will examine the effectiveness of these interventions in reducing HIV risk behaviors, relative to a “usual care/delayed intervention” group.</p>



The research protocol requires potential participants to be screened prior to enrollment to establish that they are actively at risk for HIV infection because of their current behavior (for example, having unprotected sex, having multiple partners). The protocol also includes a 30-minute baseline interview administered as an Audio Computer Assisted Self Interview (ACASI) to provide more detailed information about participants and their behavior. The following domains will be assessed during the baseline interview:

- sexual behavior
- drug and alcohol use and severity
- STD history
- outcome expectancies for condom use
- peer norms for condom use
- sociodemographic characteristics.

The baseline interview will be the same for adolescents and women except for minor differences in question wording and the inclusion or omission of age/gender appropriate items. Participants will be reassessed at 3 months and 6 months postintervention.

In addition to self report of behaviors, the Project SHIELD protocol includes biological assessment of three specific sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)—chlamydia, gonorrhea, and trichomoniasis—so that incident STDs among participants can be studied as a primary outcome. At baseline, using recently developed urine screen technology, participants will be tested and any having identified cases of these three STDs will be offered treatment. Participants will be tested again at the 3-month and 6-month followup points to identify incident cases. This will allow the evaluation of the Project SHIELD interventions to be based on both self reports of sexual behavior and biologically assessed incident disease.

After the 6-month follow-up assessment, participants in the comparison group will be offered the intervention.

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For more information about Project SHIELD or other CMHS HIV/AIDS programs, contact the **CMHS Knowledge Exchange Network (KEN)** at **1-800-789-CMHS (2647)** or on the Internet at **www.mentalhealth.org**.